

A HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT OF PERCEIVED ISLAMOPHOBIA IN NIGERIA, 1986-2019.

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Abstract

Nigerian Muslims, throughout the history of Nigeria, have somehow always played pivotal roles in the social, political and economic transformation of the Nigerian society and promoted their faith in a way that served the society at large. The Muslim population in Nigeria could be upto 99.1 million presently and thrives under constant peace, security and prosperity. Despite numerous terrorist attacks perpetuated in Northern Nigerian states where the population is predominantly Muslim, the Muslim community in Nigeria is attacked and harassed by certain individuals, organizations, groups and institutions that seem to believe that Muslims and their religious faith are a menace to society and a threat to the national stability of the nation. What could amount to Islamophobia in Nigeria must be addressed and properly assessed in a manner that identifies the exact cause of the hateful sentiment targeted against Muslims or the Islamic faith in Nigeria. The study explores the core definitions of Islamophobia explained by various international scholars and academic experts. The study presents the origin and causes of aspects of Islamophobia that took root in the nation and continues to create more tensions today despite efforts made by political leaders and activists, particularly politicians and activists from the Muslim community to tackle it from within the system both at the federal, state and local levels. Recommendations are added in this paper to resolve this potential problem of Islamophobia in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, particularly in the South-eastern and South-South regions.

Key words: Religion, Violence, Traditionalists, Muslims, Christians.

Introduction

Islam is one of the largest religions in the country and has a profound sense of spirituality and morality around social and political issues in Nigeria. It is unfortunate that the Islamic religion faces vile opposition from visible forces that tend to intimidate Nigerian Muslims from their social and political freedoms. Since its incursion in Nigeria, the religion has been a powerful force to reckon due to social elements that tend to promote the tenets of the faith. Many social and political elites who profess the religion of Islam are very fundamental about the teachings and principles of the Islamic religion and are very open about those beliefs without any form of reproach from any establishment or anything related to the Nigerian society. Despite the genuine nature of Islam, there are several elements in the country that find it difficult to tolerate and respect the tenets of the Islamic religion. These societal elements tend to be problematic about the Muslim population and their aspirations for the nation because they believe that Islam is diabolical and tends to dominate the whole of Africa with jihad and enslave the whole human race with Sharia Law. These assumptions by these people is not helpful to the Nigerian society.

The Meaning and Definition of Islamophobia

The Runnymede Trust Report (1997) defines Islamophobia as the shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam- and, therefore, to fear or dislike all or most Muslims¹. Gardell (2011) describes Islamophobia as socially reproduced prejudices and aversion to Islam and Muslims, as well as actions and practices that attack, exclude or discriminate against persons on the basis that they are or perceived to be Muslim and be associated with Islam². The Runnymede Trust Report (2017) also provides a longer and broader definition of Islamophobia as any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards or preference against Muslims that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social.

Cultural, or any other field of public life³. Awan & Zempi (2020) gives a clear definition of Islamophobia as a fear, prejudice and hatred of Muslims that leads to provocation, hostility, and intolerance by means of threatening, harassment, abuse, incitement and intimidation of Muslims, both in the online and offline world⁴. Islamophobia can be conceptualized as the set of attitudes, views, expressions, and sentiments mounted against the Muslim community and the religion of Islam. It is thoroughly explained as the thought in which anyone belonging to the Islamic faith should not enjoy certain rights and liberties guaranteed and enshrined in a democratic society.

The Origin of Islamophobia in Nigeria.

Islamophobia in Nigeria originated in 1986 during the time Nigeria was inaugurated as a member of OIC under the administration of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida⁵. When General IBB joined the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, it was assumed by prominent religious leaders and religious organizations as a crucial or deadly step made by the Babangida military regime to Islamize Nigeria⁶. A year after, the Christian Association of Nigeria began what may appear as a vicious propaganda against Nigeria's membership of OIC, calling for Christians nationwide to resist what was perceived to be a bloody approach to the Islamization of Nigeria by General IBB and the Muslim populace⁷. Religious violence soon erupted in various secondary schools, universities, and colleges in Northern Nigeria as a result of disputes over religious songs, sermons and religious meetings. One incident in Kafanchan, Kaduna State that spurred the whole situation was the Reverend Abubakar Bako fiasco. Reverend A. Bako was an itinerant Evangelical Pastor from Kano who came to Kafanchan to conduct a revival crusade at the Kafanchan Teachers' College of Education in Southern Kaduna⁸. At the crusade, he gave a fiery sermon in which he made certain references to the Qur'an to illustrate certain points in his message. According to some eye witnesses, he made lousy allegations about Prophet Muhammed and the Muslim community reciting certain verses to justify himself⁹. This sparked series of



demonstrations from Muslim students at the college who were not pleased with Bako's sermon and demanded for his head. The demonstrations escalated into brutal violence as Muslims killed Christian students and extended the violence to the outskirts of the city, killing dozens of people and destroying religious places of worship, houses and public buildings¹⁰. In retaliation, Christians in Kafanchan City launched mob attacks against Muslim preachers and destroyed many mosques and Muslim-owned businesses in the process. Many Muslims in the city were forced to evacuate from the city and re-located to Muslim populated towns and villages where they would be far away from the mayhem targeting them.

The 1990s gave prominent rise to new attacks on the Islamic community within the Eastern, Southern and Western regions of the nation. Christians who belonged to the ethnic groups of these above regions feared that Muslims might kill them and possess their lands and properties if they didn't step up in the security of their communities. In retaliation to the murders and dispossession of Christians in the North, these Christians began committing violent atrocities and expelling Muslims from their ethnic communities by destroying their businesses, their houses and properties. Some Christian leaders who had a strong influence in their ethnic communities in these regions were alleged to have encouraged various demonstrations and riots to expel Muslims from their towns and cities. Even after the military relinquished power on May 29th, 1999 to a newly elected civilian head of state, the outrageous violence against Muslims still went on in these regions. It appears that various newspaper establishments and media outlets propagated series of blatant assumptions about Islam and its adherents, calling Muslims "terrorists", "thugs", "thieves", "criminals", "sexists", "paedophiles", and "rapists". These allegations captured the Nigerian public and poisoned the minds of young Nigerians to despise or hate Muslims and their religion. These institutions, despite fierce opposition



from activists, religious bodies and politicians, continue to smear the image of Muslims and their monotheistic religion in Nigeria.

The 2000s saw the rise of massive Islamophobic-related violence in non-Muslim states. Many Muslims had to flee the East to return back to the North in order to safeguard their lives or their children's lives. The attacks that were unleashed on the Muslim community residing in the Eastern region would always happen whenever Christians in the North were massacred by Northern Muslims in the name of religion. Most Eastern governors condemned these attacks but could not do anything to prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes. South-East Governors like the late Governor Chinwoke Clement Mbadinuju (1945-2023) did his best to quell the violence in his own state, Anambra State, by assisting Northern Muslims to escape for their lives at a Nigerian Military Barracks in Awka in 2000¹¹. In the Southern region of Nigeria, Muslim schoolgirls were banned from wearing their hijabs in their respective schools and colleges¹². Muslim organizations such as MURIC, Nigerian Muslim Council, National Council of Muslim Youth Organization (NACOMYO), and many others protested against the hijab ban issued by Southern governors. This ban was not only targeted against Muslim school girls alone. Many Muslim girls in Southern Nigerian universities were also restricted from wearing hijabs in the university campus.

The 2010s did not end the embarrassing plight of Muslims in these non-Muslim states. In the Western Region, Muslim schoolchildren were restricted and expelled from schools for doing so. In 2013, Lagos State Governor Babatunde Fashola banned hijabs in Lagos schools and colleges¹³. This angered many Muslim organizations which demanded the reversal of the ban and called the ban, "an infraction of human rights". In 2016, the Baptist Girls' High School, Osogbo, Osun State banned Muslim girls from wearing hijab in the school premises. The school was taken to court by prominent Muslim organizations and lost the case as the Osun State High Court found the ban unconstitutional. In



2017, a Muslim Law graduate, Firdaus Amasa, was barred from graduating by the Nigerian Law School simply because she wore hijab to the graduation ceremonies and was denied entrance to the International Conference Centre, Abuja where the call to bar programme was to take place¹⁴. In 2019, the International School Ibadan banned their female Muslim students from wearing hijab on their school uniforms. Several Muslim organizations called the ban, “a violation of the fundamental human rights of Muslim girls”.

Theoretical Framework.

This paper is based on the “second theoretical perspective of Islamophobia” theory. Specifically, the second theoretical perspective is conceptualized on the reality of “us vs them”. The “second theoretical perspective of Islamophobia” theory was first established by Debra L. Oswald and it means the theory which stresses that social groups are distinguished not only by religion, but by race or ethnicity and they see each other differently from an aggressive or suspicious approach. This theory explains that social groups are categorized as out-groups and in-groups¹⁵. In-groups are groups where individuals belong and perceive themselves from a positive view. With that positive view, this group gives its members preferential treatment of any kind¹⁶. Out-groups are groups where individuals who are distinguished from the in-group and don’t belong with that community belong and are perceived by the other group as outcasts. According to the second theoretical perspective of Islamophobia theory, “Nigerian Christians and Traditionalists” belong to the in-group category while “Nigerian Muslims” belong to the out-group category.

Several scholars of this theory believe that Nigerian Christians and Traditionalists (the In-group category) do not consider the Nigerian Muslims (The Out-group category) in the Federal Republic of Nigeria as people and perceive them as the aggressors and enemies of anything Christian or African spiritual. They feel that because of their religion, Nigerian Muslims are violent, abusive, malicious, secretive, and



dangerous. Most times, they consider the God of the Muslims foreign to that of Christianity and the deities of African Traditional Religion. For instance, a famous Nigerian pastor, Rev. Christian Oyakilome stated that the God of the Muslims is not the same as the God of Christianity¹⁷. This statement angered Muslim leaders nationwide who demanded that he retracted his statement and apologize to the Muslim community. This best explains why non-Muslim religious organizations, social organizations like IPOB, MASSOB, CAN, PFN, Ohaneze Ndigbo, ICAN, AILI, YCE, CMO, CWO, CYON and many others tend to use religious sentiments to fuel up violence against Nigerian Muslims who reside in the South-East, South-South and South-West regions of Nigeria.

These groups also use their influence to urge governments in the country to push federal and state legislations to save their communities from the so-called “violent and terrorizing” Muslim community. These scholars are of the opinion that “us vs them” dilemma is one of the factors behind certain state governments in Southern, Eastern and Western Nigerian States recently passing bills to ban Muslim attires, foods, festivals, prayers, and holidays in their respective regional states in Nigeria. Other factors may have arisen as a result of political and economic persuasions which may or may not have influenced the decisions made by these governors or state house of assemblies. Other scholars of the second theoretical perspective of Islamophobia theory assert that Nigerian Christians and Traditionalists do not at times target Muslims for their religion. They may sometimes go for the next thing other than Islam- the ethnicity or tribe of Nigerian Muslims. Various non-Muslim religious leaders in Nigeria had made bigoted remarks about Fulani and Hausa people in recent events. In 2019, Pastor Tunde Bakare said that Fulani herdsmen were a group of terrorists who rape, murder, and kidnap innocent civilians¹⁸. This is not the only instance where a famous religious leader have made such remarks. Other Christian and Traditional leaders have made similar bigoted remarks about the Fulani and Hausa people. These leaders assume that the only



way to dismantle the Muslim people is to belittle the ethnicities of Muslims whose population is either predominantly Hausa or Fulani. This strategy has been employed by several religious and political leaders in the country to counter and undermine the Muslim identity and religion through various means.

Aspects of Islamophobia in South-Eastern Nigeria

Islamophobia in the South-Eastern region of the Federal Republic of Nigeria began after the Nigerian Civil War. Many Igbo indigenes were dissatisfied with the way the war ended as many of them experienced unemployment, starvation, and lack of basic social services at the time. This experience caused a great uproar among the Igbo people and made several of them to look to other options or alternatives in order to solve the predicament of their people. By the 1980s, North-led Nigerian coups placed the Muslim community at the pinnacle of power and authority in the country and left Igbo Christians and Traditionalists at the mercy of successive Muslim military governments who at times did not have their best interests at heart.

In the 1990s, the spread of Islam in the South-East exploded rapidly as some Igbo indigenes converted to the Muslim faith as prominent Muslim preachers arrived in several Igbo states to evangelize Islam to the Igbo people. As the Muslim faith grew in these states, so did its schools and colleges. Islamic schools and colleges were established by Muslim clerics in the region and about 14 mosques were built in Nsukka, Enugu State. Because of this, Nsukka Division in Enugu State became widely known as the Islamic capital city of Igboland because of its many mosques¹⁹. After General Abacha's death in 1998, there were speculations in Igboland that a Muslim would replace Abacha and when General Abdulsalami Abubakar was sworn in as the new military Head of State, many indigenes of Igboland feared that his presidency might encourage more alliance with the Muslim Arab world and marginalize Christians and Igbo traditional worshippers from the political and social spotlight of Nigerian politics. In 1999, Igbo nationalism took centre



stage and sparked a debate over the future of Igbo society and how to resolve the power complex of the Muslim community in Igboland and in Nigeria as a whole. As a result of this debate, Igbo separatist groups were established to achieve an independent Igbo country like the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). When Chief Arewa Obasanjo was sworn into office as the newly elected civilian head of state on May 29th, 1999, it was expected that the new president would maintain religious unity and safeguard the religious liberties of Christians and Nigerian traditional worshippers.

The Obasanjo administration did not pass any legislation to discriminate or molest Nigerian Muslims but his Vice-President, Atiku Abubakar provoked a series of events that would forever put the security of Muslims in Igboland in jeopardy. In 2000, Vice-President Atiku Abubakar shut down Sharia Courts in Northern states and wanted it banned in the Muslim North entirely²⁰. Many Muslim religious leaders condemned the move while some prominent Christian religious leaders, particularly leaders from the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and Pentecostal denominations praised it. The move to shut down Sharia Courts in the Muslim North caused an uproar in Muslim-majority states and violent riots took place as many Muslims surrounded the Sharia courts to keep the federal police from closing them down²¹.

This escalated into deadly violence and bloodshed, and several people and public properties were lost. Several churches and certain institutions belonging to the Northern Christian community were targeted and destroyed by the Muslim mob, and some Christian leaders were murdered and castrated by Muslim protesters. While these atrocities were committed against Christians in the Muslim North, Igboland witnessed a brutal retaliation against the Muslim community by the Igbo indigenes who were either affiliated with Christianity or the Igbo traditional religion²². Many Muslims were assaulted by aggravated Igbo indigenes who believed that the Muslim community might try to

incite violence and genocide against Igbo people and establish an Islamic Caliphate in Igboland. Violent anti-Muslim attacks loomed in Igboland and there were calls from individual Muslims and Muslim organizations to South-eastern governors such as late Governor Chinwoke Clement Mbadinuju (1945-2023) of Anambra State, Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia State, Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu State, Sam Ominyi Egwu of Ebonyi State, and Achike Udenwa of Imo State to protect Muslim people from violent attacks and dangerous intimidations from Igbo Christians and Traditional worshippers. Despite these calls, none of these governors did not lift a finger to deal with the violent anti-Islamic attacks unleashed against Muslims in South-Eastern states except for some Igbo governors such as the late Chief Chinwoke Clement Mbadinuju (1945-2023) of Anambra State, the then Governor of Anambra State who assisted Muslims by giving them shelter and food in Nigerian military bases located in Igbo states²³. Igbo separatist groups employed certain propaganda tactics to target Muslims. One of those tactics included the employment of conspiracy theories which were inaccurate and baseless. Those conspiracy theories would be spat out by these separatist organizations during their radio broadcast hours to justify the view that the Muslim world is on a worldwide mission to Islamize the human race with violence and terrorism²⁴. The radio broadcasters who were affiliated with MASSOB would point out historical events in Nigeria's history that would help to prove the Muslim agenda working in Nigeria which included the Usman Dan Fodio Jihad of 1804. They even went as far as using quotes of prominent dead Nigerian Muslim anti-colonial leaders such as Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Sardauna Ahmadu Bello, Mallam Isa Kaita Wazirin Katsina, Muhammadu Ribadu, and Mallam Aminu Kano to prove that there was a huge conspiracy by Nigerian Muslim elites to completely make Nigeria an Islamic State or dominate the landscape of Nigerian political life and exclude the Igbo people from it.

In 2006, Muslim riots rocked the city of Jos in North-central Nigeria and killed dozens of people²⁵. While this was happening in this North-

central part of Nigeria, many Igbo youths in Onitsha armed with guns, stones, and machetes retaliated against the killings in the North.²⁶ Many Muslim men and women ran to army barracks to escape death at the hands of Igbo Christian rioters²⁷. Several Muslims who were attacked by the rioters were hospitalized and treated at the local hospital in Onitsha. These murders and attacks provoked outrage and condemnation from Muslim organizations, the international community, African leaders and world leaders. Calls were made by prominent Muslim leaders and Nigerian political figures for the Enugu governor, Chimaroke Nnamani at the time to establish an inquiry commission to investigate the attacks that happened in Onitsha but that commission was never established and no one was arrested, charged or prosecuted for those crimes. The year 2007 produced a new president for Nigeria as Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (1951-2010) was sworn in as Nigeria's 2nd Civilian Head of State²⁸. Prominent Igbo leaders congratulated his ascendancy into power but the Igbo separatists had mixed feelings about Yar'Adua and his national agenda. Several Christian leaders in Igboland distrusted Yar'Adua's social priorities due to his Islamic upbringing and felt that his presidency would endanger the security and well-being of Christians both in Igboland and in Nigeria as a whole²⁹. But President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua assured that he would be honest and sincere with them³⁰. Despite the distrust of some Christians and Traditional worshippers in the Igbo South-east region over the Yar'Adua administration, the presidency of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was short-lived and his vice-president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan took over the presidential mantle on 5th May, 2010³¹.

The early 2010s marked a new series of challenges for the Goodluck Ebele Jonathan administration as many Muslim clerics expected that President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan would protect the Muslim community from reprisal attacks coming from non-Muslims³². Many Muslims in Igboland continuously feared for their lives as indigenous Igbo traditional chiefs called for political unity against the growing rise of Muslim presence in the region. Some Muslim leaders in Igboland



were compelled to introduce faith-based initiatives to foster peace and unity with their Igbo Christians and Traditionalist neighbours in order to discourage the growing religious tensions in the Igbo south-east region. In the case of Anambra and Imo States, Muslim community leaders would call for prayers during Muslim festivities, particularly Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha for the peace and security of the South-east and divine protection of Igbo state politicians and government officials. They even would invite these state governors and government officials in order to foster friendship, tolerance, cooperation, unity, brotherhood, and peace between the Igbo people and the Muslim community. Several Nigerian political and religious personalities were also invited to these Muslim festivities in Anambra and Imo States to help the process of cooperation and unity between Muslims and non-Muslims in the country nationwide. In October 2018, President Muhammadu Buhari called on Eastern governors to condemn violence in Igboland and ensure the security and well-being of the Muslim community there. He again called on Eastern governors to condemn and disavow Igbo separatist groups in order that security and peace could be achieved in the region. In August 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari urged Muslims in the South-east to seek peace, neighbourliness, unity and tranquillity with their Igbo neighbours and to always to be law-abiding citizens in order to shame those who embraced hate and its influences in the society. In December 2019, he called on Nigerian Christians to not let terrorists turn them against Muslims and implored them to stay away from unhelpful conspiracy theories that were divisive and unproductive for the country³³. Despite this plea from President Buhari, violence against Muslims in Igboland persisted in many deadly ways and instances.

Aspects of Islamophobia in South-Southern Nigeria, 1988-2019.

Islamophobia in the South-southern region of the Federal Republic of Nigeria could be traced back to the era of the Ibrahim Badmosi Babangida administration. General Ibrahim Babangida appointed military administrators to govern old and new Southern states and these



military administrators were mostly from the Southern region of the country. Since the 13th Century, Muslims in the Southern region of Nigeria had established towns and villages where their religion and values were practised and upheld, and where trade and commerce expanded and thrived. Towns like Agbede and Auchi were established by Muslim leaders in Bini Kingdom and such towns took care of the welfare and basic services of the Muslim community there. The 1980s produced deadly suspicions of the Muslim community and its religion which many Southern Christians and traditional worshippers considered foreign, barbaric and violent. When OIC inaugurated Nigeria as its prestigious member in 1986, Southern traditional chiefs and elders were concerned that Nigeria would soon become an Islamic Republic like other Muslim nations in Africa, Asia and the Middle East and their respective kingdoms and communities would be targets of repression and intimidation by General Ibrahim Babangida's military government.

Though Muslims, Christians, and indigenous traditional worshippers had lived in peace for over 2 decades in the Southern region, there was a need to suspect and fear that tribal identity, culture and religion might diminish if Islam became a dominant religion in Nigeria and the Southern region in particular. Several church denominational leaders made similar calls but went beyond their counterparts in the Anglican Church. Pentecostal preachers, during organized crusades and prayer meetings, would emphasize that the Muslim people practised an Antichrist religion and those who practised Islam were agents of the devil³⁴. The 1990s proved to be a tense and turbulent time for the Muslim community in the Southern region as local communities began to demand for environmental justice and equity from the Abacha military administration due to the environmental degradation experienced by the local indigenes from foreign multi-national companies. When Ken Saro Wiwa and the eight other MOSOP leaders were executed by the Abacha regime in 1995, many in the South feared that the political influence of the Muslim people might dominate the Niger Delta and marginalize the indigenous people there of their rights



and resources. In order to secure their rights and resources, the indigenous peoples needed to resort to new and efficient tactics to defend themselves from what they perceived as “The Muslim take-over of the Niger Delta”.

By the 2000s, Niger Delta militant organizations like MEND, NDPVF, and NDV had been formed and begun operations in the riverine areas of the Niger Delta region. These militant organizations were responsible for kidnappings, killings and piracy which made the Niger Delta very difficult and unsafe to stay. Muslim women and girls were recorded to have been raped and abused by militant soldiers during these attacks but these atrocities were never reported for fear of reprisals from the supporters of Niger Delta militant groups. None of these crimes were ever prosecuted by the Obasanjo administration or state governors who had every opportunity to do it but couldn't do it because of fear of indigenous supporters of Niger Delta militant groups. The Musa Yar'Adua administration tried to promote peace and stability in the Niger Delta by ordering for the release of Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, an Ijaw leader³⁵. Laws were implemented and enforced restricting Muslim children from wearing hijab in schools and colleges, practising their religious holidays and festivals, and holding Friday prayers in several places considered sacred by traditional worshippers of indigenous deities³⁶.

In 2011, Musa Yar'Adua's successor, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was sworn in as Nigeria's new president and many Muslim leaders accepted his presidency in good faith³⁷. During his presidency, MEND threatened to bomb mosques and kill Muslim clerics if Boko Haram did not stop killing Christians in the North³⁸. President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan remained silent over these alleged threats and made Muslim organizations and religious leaders question his capabilities and actions as the President. As time rolled on, the Muslim community in the South-South began to depend heavily on support from Northern Muslim clerics who would come and provide moral and spiritual support for



them as these violent attacks escalated in the region. By the time the Presidency of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan was coming to a close, the militants began to think of other means to advance their struggle for their motherland. The outgoing president had just broke an amnesty deal with the militants, hoping to end the conflict that had devastated the region for over 4 decades³⁹. When Rt. General Muhammadu Buhari became president in 2015, all hopes to continue the amnesty programme was dashed as the new administration cancelled any form of negotiations with the militant rebels. Between 2000 and 2019, there was a high rise of hijab bans in several South-South states, particularly in Delta, Cross River, Rivers, and Edo States. Schools, colleges and universities restricted Muslims from wearing their attires on their property. President Muhammadu Buhari called on Southern governors, traditional leaders, religious leaders and members of state legislatures of respective South-South states to condemn these acts and try to find solutions to the spread of Islamophobia in the region⁴⁰.

Recommendations

This study recommends that the most possible way to eradicate aspects of Islamophobia in Nigeria, particularly in the affected regions is by the federal government initiating social awareness campaigns and programs against Islamophobia, religious bigotry and religious violence. Such programs and campaigns will help in educating the Nigerian masses about the evils of Islamophobia, religious bigotry and religious violence in the country, and strengthening national unity, equity, and integration in a multi-religious Nigeria. Bills proposed by the Nigerian president or the National House of Assembly should be strongly directed at curbing Islamophobia and religious bigotry in private and public institutions in the country. On the other hand, private institutions such as banks, schools, colleges, universities, clinics, hospitals, and filling stations should each establish an inclusion-oriented policy to place disciplinary actions on staff members who molest or harass anyone based on one's religion. State governments in South-East, South-South and South-West states should initiate social awareness campaigns against Islamophobia



and religious bigotry, organize and create religious festivities and celebrations which will unify both religions, and suspend, expel or dismiss government legislators or officials who make bigoted statements about Islam or Muslims in general. Most importantly, these state governments must completely denounce ethnic terrorist groups and disassociate themselves from their violent activities.

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